588 582 751 wears a bracelet made of copper and iron intertwined, kalembanga, which is believed to protect the wearer against any disaster due to the technically illegal marriage. The kalembanga is also believed to protect the children born of the union from sudden death.

Polygyny

595 Polygyny is the rule throughout Mossi country. It is true that the number of wives varies with the resources and position of the individual. Mere heads of compounds who are somewhat well off may have [180] from five to eight wives and numerous fiancées. The [584] latter are usually reserved for the dakompa (older sons and younger brothers of the head of the family), assuming that these men will in turn render real service and be completely devoted to the head of the household.

There are many reasons for the practice of polygyny, but the main one is procreation. The under-nourished natives must rely on [853 834] the mother's milk to feed their babies and must therefore wait two or even three years before resuming sexual relations with a wife who is a nursing mother. Therefore, they prefer to have several wives.

Consummation

585 When the young girl is taken to her husband, she is entrusted to a woman whom she will henceforth treat as "mother."

A few days after the departure of the cortege, whose composition we shall describe presently, the man claims his fiancée. She is taken at night to the nuptial hut, which has no special features, and no one is present at the consummation of the marriage. In this respect the Mossi differ from the Bambara, who have a griot or an old woman accompany the couple to help the young man, if necessary, overcome the girl's resistance.

It goes without saying that if the girl is found to be a virgin, the [181] husband is overjoyed. If she is not a virgin, the love which he may have felt for her before possessing her is much diminished. The man shows the girl his anger, certain that she will at least tell her mother about it.

Social Status of the Moaga Woman and Work Assigned to Her

562 The Moaga woman is regarded as a veritable beast of burden. Household duties and the weaving of cotton for her own and her husband's clothes are not her only occupations. [183] She helps her husband cultivate the family field, and she has her own plots for peanuts, beans, etc.

She endures wretched treatment and must always submit to her husband's whims. She enjoys no consideration whatever and is never called upon to give an opinion. The husband alone rules the home.

[842] If she is so unfortunate as to have no children, she is regarded with scorn. She carries the loads when a move is in progress. A [483] basket and a pyramid of gourds containing her effects and those of her husband are balanced on her head, while the husband canters beside her on a horse or takes his ease on a donkey. If he is afoot, he carries only his quiver, his arrows, his bow, and a club.

To be sure, the Moaga woman may express in unpleasant words her resentment of the maltreatment to which she is subjected, because the Mossi admit that she has no weapon other than her tongue. This is what is meant by the saying, "A woman's mouth is her quiver."

Conjugal Life

● 834 Interdictions and permissible acts. The couple is forbidden to have sexual relations at the following times.

834 1. For a period of not less than two years and a half after the
853 birth of a child to safeguard the baby's life. Indeed, it is believed that each child comes into the world with its own supply of milk, and if another child were to be conceived during the nursing period, [184] the first would die because the milk of the newborn child would be fatal to him.

834 2. During the menstrual period. The reason for this prohibition
841 that the husband's fetishes and charms lose part of their "power" after relations at this time.

834 3. A pregnant woman visits her husband during the first six or
843 seven months. All relations then cease until some time after the delivery, as indicated above.

304 to look into the enclosure. If he should commit such an indiscretion which is considered a gross blunder, he at once suffers the consequences. He is immediately dragged into the circle undressed, and circumcised without any consultation with his relatives.

It is strictly forbidden to enter the kéogo, with néoda (shoes), a pougla [269] (red fez), and kandé (spears). If a canton chief should take it into his head to visit the circumcised boys -- an unlikely situation -- he would have to leave all his insignia of rank outside.

304 Since it has been observed that young men who have had
834 sexual intercourse before their circumcision had difficulty in being healed after the operation, they are advised to avoid sexual intercourse for the first few months after the scars form.

304 They do not eat wagha sauce (a sauce made of the immature
262 fruit of the wagka, a tree of the kapok family).

Required exercises for the bankoensé. The bankoensé are
304 required to perform painful and tiring exercises, which consider-
526 ably retards their recovery. We shall describe the principal ones below.

Very early in the morning when it is very cool -- we have pointed out that the ceremony takes place at the beginning of the cool season -- the boys are awakened and forced to lie prone on the cold sand without any covering. This is the bourga. Naturally enough, the limbs become a bit stiff, so they are roundly whipped with berrella (branches of certain trees), ostensibly to give them warmth and strength. Then, to the beat of the tom-toms, they must do the exercise called guella. This difficult feat involves jumping like a frog from a crouching position [270] and at intervals making a circular movement with the legs. They may also be required to do the even more difficult nagda, an exercise which involves walking on the hands with the legs in the air. Another exercise requires the boys, starting from an erect position, to bend backwards until the hands touch the ground. This is called kaougsèga, "back breaker." The unfortunates whose hands fail to reach the ground get a bump on the head. There are also movements of the head called zouanka, like those made by Kassonké girls and the Wiskamba of Mossi country.

644 "In addition to these dignitaries, the Moro Naba is surrounded with a veritable army of soronê (pages), samandé (bodyguards), ourkima (grooms), and jussaba (eunuchs)."

Some explanations are in order concerning the soronê. They are young boys or adolescents, from seven or eight to fifteen years old, who are to be found not only around the Moro Naba but around all Mossi chiefs, no matter who they may be, ministers, dignitaries, canton chiefs, and even village chiefs. These chiefs obtain them, as we saw earlier, by claiming the first-born son as well as the first-born daughter of all the men to whom they give a wife. The boy is made into a soronê, and the girl used to perpetuate the recruitment of soronê and servitors by giving her in marriage to one of them.

644 838 The soronê wear their hair like women. Like them, they wear heavy copper bracelets at the wrists and ankles, and if rumor is to be credited, they not only /570/ bear the attributes of women but also substitute for them occasionally. It seems that the Mossi must 834 not have carnal relations with their wives on Friday. This is a religious ordinance meant to ingratiate the divinities, but it overlooked the soronê.... In any case this corruption does not reach the common masses of the Mossi, who do not have the means to employ soronê. Thus it applies only to chiefs.

644 No matter what the case may be, the soronê are usually selected among the most attractive boys, and some of them have great beauty with their woman's hairdo.

Another duty of their position is to remain virgins... as far as women are concerned.

644 781 684 "Every year," says Moulins, "the chastity of the Moro Naba's soronê is put to a test. They are requested by the Pouy Naba to cast their reflection into a gourd full of water, and according to the manner in which the reflection is cast, they are proclaimed free from stain or convicted of carnal relations, in which case, prior to our occupation, they were put to death without further delay. This is because the soronê, as confidants of the Naba, are often entrusted with state secrets and could only maintain the discretion required by their position if they were to avoid the entreaties of love.

644 "When the soronê reach manhood, the Naba gives them a wife and sends them away. The first child born of the union between a soronê and the wife given him by the Naba devolves to the latter,

644 Under him were the Kos Naba, who levied taxes on general merchandise sold in the markets, [651] and the Nemdo Naba, who collected taxes on meat sold in the markets and was responsible for distributing meat within the royal household. Most of these positions were hereditary, but here primogeniture was not as important as in the ruling and administrative lineages.

[648] The various foreign groups in the capital also sent representatives to the court. Among them were the Zangweoto Naba for the Hausa, a Naba for the Songhai, and an Imam for the Ouagadougou Moslems. Even total strangers such as the early European visitors were placed under the care of a special chief.

The most ubiquitous persons at the Mogho Naba's court were the pages, who were boys between the ages of ten and twenty. These boys were regarded as comparable to the ruler's wives, since they served him in the same manner as ordinary Mossi women serve their husbands at home. They wore women's bracelets and women's clothes, and dressed their hair in the same style as the royal wives. As we have seen, they were forbidden sexual [834] intercourse until they were released from the royal household.[22]

173 644 The institution of pages is said to have originated sometime in the seventeenth century, during the reign of Mogho Naba Waraga. Before his reign, the wives of the Mogho Naba attended him at court. The change came during a lengthy civil war between Waraga and the chief of Riziam territory, who had refused to pay allegiance to him. During five "dry seasons" (five years) of fighting, the Mogho Naba was attended only by a small boy. He found him so efficient that at the end of the war he resolved to employ only page boys and prohibit his wives from attending him at court. This origin is conjectural. However, the use of pages effectively segregated the royal wives from court intrigues, and, once instituted, the practice spread throughout the country.

644 The Mogho Naba had little difficulty recruiting pages. Many of them were the sons of pughsiudse whom he had given to his subjects as wives. In theory, the Mogho Naba could select boys at will, but in practice the pages were usually selected by the ministers and sent to the palace. Most boys willingly accepted service, but some, often with the support of their parents, resisted confinement to the palace. Some ten-year-olds even ran away to escape their impending fate, but they were soon caught and braceleted with the insignia of their new status. Once this had been done, their lineages encouraged them to remain at the palace. Their period of service [145] terminated when they began to "push beards," usually at about eighteen years of age. One district chief claims that ancient Mogho Nanamse used to take the sons of district chiefs as pages and release them only when their

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greeting a lower status benefactor, a man will get down and greet him from a kneeling position. It is because of this elaborate system of greeting, with the many opportunities thus provided for one person to slight another, that many important persons never go to the market. As a rule, the failure of any one person to give the required greeting to another when they meet in the market place is always an indication of strained relations between them.

The persons from whom an individual may buy goods, and the kinds of goods which may be purchased by one individual from another, are governed by convention and social relationships. A person may not buy anything from a relative except European goods. A man cannot buy any but cooked food in the market place, and often he asks a female relative or a passing female to buy it for him. To do the contrary is held to be unmanly and indicative of a bad character. A woman will not buy cotton cloth but will send a man to buy it for her. She would hate to have people believe that she has no male relative to weave it for her, or what is more likely, that she is too lazy to spin the cotton thread which would then be woven for her. A woman may purchase any type of commodity from other women, but she must be careful not to patronize men who are known to be libertines or with whom she is suspected of having an affair. She must also be careful about running errands for men, since people know that men often use this device to establish amorous relationships with women. Men also use this device to give presents, or to arrange secret meetings with them. If any man sees a female relative involved in any of these misadventures, he chases her away and more than likely curses the man, if he does not fight him. In any event, he warns the man to leave the woman alone.

The market is one of the few places where men and women can initiate relationships not sanctioned by their relatives. Under normal conditions marriages are arranged between unrelated individuals through the lineage members who establish "friendly" relationships. Two friends might ask their lineage heads for women to exchange as wives or the "friend" who has received more gifts from the other will give over a wife. Because the older men most often have goods and women at their disposal, they are usually the ones who receive wives. The result is that most young men have no wives, and until they inherit wives from lineage members, are continually seeking to establish intimate relations with women whom they meet on the market place. The technique which a young man employes to gain the favors of a woman he sees at market is highly stereotyped. First of all, he must ascertain that the woman in question is not a member of his maximal lineage or married to a member of his own lineage. A responsible